

# The Boston Globe

## Delahunt won't seek reelection

**Says 'it's time' after long career, and Bishop case not a factor**

By Susan Milligan, Globe Staff | March 5, 2010

WASHINGTON - Representative William D. Delahunt will announce today that he will not seek reelection to Congress, ending a nearly 40-year career in elected office and giving Republicans hope of capturing the district, which stretches from Cape Cod to the South Shore.

"It's got nothing to do with politics," the seven-term Democrat from Quincy said yesterday. "Life is about change. I think it's healthy. It's time."

The 68-year-old lawmaker said he has been considering leaving the House for several years, but was talked out of it two years ago by the late senator Edward M. Kennedy, who convinced his friend he should stay and help President Obama with his first-term agenda.

"He said: 'Come on - this is a new time. It's a new era. We [will] have a new president. We're all needed,' " Delahunt recalled. After Kennedy died last year, Delahunt said, he grappled with whether to stay and work on the issues the senator held dear.

"Clearly, since his death, there's something missing. There's a void. With the void, you feel the need to be here because there's much to do," Delahunt said wistfully in an exclusive interview.

But the congressman said he concluded that after nearly four decades in public service, the grueling House schedule was taking its toll on his personal life.

"I've got a granddaughter," the divorced father of two said. "Given the pace down here, I don't want to miss out on her childhood, her first year."

The congressman has faced recent questions about the handling of the 1986 Amy Bishop shooting case, which occurred in Braintree when he was Norfolk district attorney. Backed up by his then-top prosecutor, Delahunt has said consistently that his office was not told that Bishop fled with a loaded weapon after killing her brother in what police then called an accident.

But the case has absolutely nothing to do with his decision to retire, Delahunt said. Several of his friends and associates confirmed that the lawmaker has been mulling his departure for years, and very seriously considering it for many months.

Voters in Delahunt's 10th District gave Republican Scott Brown his best margins in the state in the Jan. 19 special election to fill Kennedy's seat, giving the GOP hopes of breaking the Democrats' lock on the House delegation.

But Delahunt said the wave of anti-incumbent anger demonstrated by the surge for Brown also had no effect on his decision.

Delahunt's retirement is the 17th among House Democrats and the third among lawmakers with close ties to Kennedy. Senator Chris Dodd, Democrat of Connecticut and a close Kennedy friend, announced his retirement in January; Representative Patrick Kennedy of Rhode Island, the late senator's son, followed suit last month.

Delahunt told Obama about his decision yesterday at a bill-signing ceremony for a travel and tourism promotion measure Delahunt wrote with Representative Roy Blunt, Republican of Missouri. The president said he understood and wished him well, said Delahunt.

Many Democrats - including House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and House majority leader Steny Hoyer - urged Delahunt to stay another term, worried that the volatile campaign environment could give the GOP a chance at the seat. Joseph P. Kennedy III's decision earlier this week not to seek the seat makes Democrats even more nervous. But the congressman - while declining to name a favorite potential successor - said he is "confident it will stay Democratic."

Among Republicans, state Representative Jeffrey D. Perry of Sandwich has said he intends to run for the seat, and former state treasurer Joseph D. Malone and state Senator Robert Hedlund of Weymouth are said to be mulling a run. On the Democratic side, Norfolk District Attorney William R. Keating, state Senator Robert O'Leary of Barnstable, and former insurance company executive Philip J. Edmundson are considering campaigns.

Delahunt established himself in Washington as a leading voice on Latin American and Caribbean issues, traveling many times to Cuba, Haiti, and Venezuela, where he negotiated with President Hugo Chávez to provide discounted oil from Venezuela, the fourth-largest supplier of foreign oil to the United States.

He also hosted a "Grupo de Boston" weekend on Cape Cod with Venezuelan government and opposition leaders, hoping to end the feuding by having them spend time together in a neutral place.

Despite being one of the House's most ardent and reliable liberals, Delahunt has developed many close relationships with Republicans, including Blunt, the former Republican whip. A 2009 survey of House members listed Delahunt as among the top 10 most bipartisan Democrats in the chamber.

Representative Jo Ann Emerson, Republican of Missouri, counts Delahunt as one of her closest allies in the House - even when the two end up on the opposite side of an issue. "In spite of being very liberal, he's very open. He wants to listen to your side of things," Emerson said.

Working with Ray LaHood, then a Republican representative from Illinois and a death penalty proponent, the anticapital punishment Delahunt spent years going from member to member to win support for a measure giving death row inmates greater access to DNA testing that could prove their innocence. The bill became law in 2004.

“He votes like a liberal whack job,” quipped Representative Steven LaTourette, a conservative Ohio Republican who worked with Delahunt on ethics inquiries and the examination of the FBI in Boston. “But when it comes to working together, he is the person I want to be at the head of that team.”